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AUTHOR	Hanley, Tom; Melecio, Ray
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ABSTRACT

The identification and recruitment (ID&R) process is an important element in the delivery of migrant services. Federal regulations currently require each state to find eligible migrant children residing within its borders. This chapter discusses essential factors that affect the ID&R of migrant children by educators at the state, regional, and local levels. Development of a realistic plan for finding and determining the eligibility of a state's or region's migrant population is critical. One key to a good recruitment plan is understanding the area's agricultural processes and employment patterns. The state's departments of agriculture and labor and cooperative extension programs can provide such information. Three major aspects of developing a recruitment plan are: (1) planning/logistics (deciding where to recruit, following protocol and regulations, targeting priority students, networking, and having knowledgeable recruiters); (2) initial staff training and plan implementation (the Certificate of Eligibility, liberal versus conservative interpretation of eligibility guidelines, assessment of child and family needs, characteristics of good recruiters, cultural and language implications, and community-based recruiting); and (3) monitoring and evaluating success (recruiter training and supervision, record keeping, friendly audits, and annual checks of plan elements). (SV)

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CHAPTER 4

Ideas and Strategies for Identification and Recruitment

BY TOM HANLEY AND RAY MELECIO

Various factors affect the identification and recruitment (ID&R) of migrant children and their families, including a region's type of agriculture and geography, demographic characteristics of the workers, relationships with other agencies and organizations working with the target population, and program services. Therefore, every migrant program, whether at the state, regional, or district level, needs to make choices that meet its recruitment needs. This chapter discusses essential factors that affect the ID&R of migrant children by educators at the state, regional, and local levels.

Why Recruit Migrant Children?

The ID&R process is an important element in the delivery of migrant services. Federal regulations currently require each state to find eligible migrant children residing within its borders. As stated in the *Preliminary Guidance for the Migrant Education Program, Title I, Part C, Public Law 103-382,* "The State Education Agency (SEA) is

RC 024215

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responsible for the ID&R of *all* [emphasis added] eligible migrant children in the state."[1]

Although highly mobile migrant students could offer positive lessons on diversity and resiliency, they often have low academic achievement and high drop-out rates. Their constant mobility frequently translates to low school attendance, poor nutrition, high poverty, inadequate housing, and health problems, which all lead to academic deficiencies. Moreover, the children of families who move are more likely to have growth delays or learning disorders.[2]

Compounding the problem is the fact that individual schools usually have less time to work with children who move from place to place. Many eligible migrant students fail to receive timely services because educators and recruiters do not know they exist. Consequently, finding and recruiting migrant children plays an essential role in providing adequate and timely services to this population.[3]

Traditionally, funding for migrant education programs depended on the number of children identified and deemed eligible. However, the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 shifted the focus of funding from the total number of children recruited to the number of priority migrant children targeted and served. Services now are prioritized based upon the children most at risk of failing, each state's academic standards, and children whose school year has been interrupted due to migration. While the level of need determines the priority of

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[1]U.S. Department of Education, Office of Migrant Education, *Preliminary Guidance for Migrant Education Program, Title I, Part C, Public Law 103-382: Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as amended by the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (IASA)* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 1994), http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/MEP/PrelimGuide/title.html/ (accessed June 4, 2003), 2.

[2]Migrant Student Records System, *Identification and Recruitment Handbook* (Sunnyside: Washington State Migrant Education Program, 2001); and David Wood and others, "Impact of Family Relocation on Children's Growth, School Function, and Behavior," *Journal of the American Medical Association* 270, no. 11 (15 September 1993): 1334-38.

[3]U.S. Department of Education, *Preliminary Guidance*; U.S. General Accounting Office, *Elementary School Children: Many Change Schools Frequently, Harming their Education* (report to the Honorable Marcy Kaptur, House of Representatives, GAO-HEHS-94-45) (Gaithersburg, MD: U.S. General Accounting Office, 1994) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 369 526), 10; and Shelley Davis, *Child Labor in Agriculture* (ERIC Digest) (Charleston, WV: ERIC Clearinghouse on Rural Education and Small Schools, 1997) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 405 159).

services, identifying and recruiting migrant children continues to be necessary because the most needy families traditionally do not seek social and educational services. Federal funding for services correlates directly with the number of children a district identifies and recruits. While additional funding should not be a primary motivation for serving migrant students, effective ID&R is essential for a program's ongoing and seamless operation.[4]

Recruiters need to gather specific information to develop a realistic plan for finding and determining the eligibility of a state's or region's migrant population. One key to a good recruitment plan is understanding the area's agricultural processes and employment patterns. The best recruitment plans usually are developed by the recruiters and administrators most knowledgeable about a state's or region's agriculture and farm labor force.

Understanding the Agriculture and Farm-Worker Labor Force of a State or Region

The first step is to get a current picture of a state's agriculture, processing, and fishing industries. State agencies involved with these industries can provide useful information for determining a state's migrant population. In addition, these agencies can be invaluable contacts and offer resources for future networking activities.

Department of Agriculture

In each state, the department of agriculture will have up-to-date information on current land usage as well as the types of crops grown and processed. It can forecast harvesting trends, particularly expansions and reductions in specific industries, and provide information on the seasons and number of crops by region or county. In addition, the department may have maps on current land usage and forecasted trends, specifying the location and concentration of agricultural or fishing activities. These can be very helpful when making decisions on the deployment of recruitment staff.

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[4]U.S. Department of Education, *Preliminary Guidance*, 2; *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, U.S. Code*, vol. 20, secs. 1301-1309 (2002), http://www.ed.gov/legislation/ESEA02/pg8.html/ (accessed January 8, 2003); and Pennsylvania Migrant Education Program, *National Identification and Recruitment: Recruiter's Guide* (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Department of Education, 1999), 5.

Department of Labor

Another useful resource is the state department of labor, which usually can provide information on the whereabouts of farm labor. Farmers who use more than a specified number of farm laborers are required by law to report that information to their state department of labor, specifically to the monitor advocate. Some farmers employ labor under one of the federal government's guest worker programs, which invite adult farm laborers (usually males) from other countries to work on domestic farms. Some of these workers may be younger than 22 and eligible for migrant services. The monitor advocate can provide a list of farms currently employing farm laborers and can identify those farms or processing plants hiring through the various guest worker programs.

Cooperative Extension Programs

The state's land-grant college and cooperative extension programs also can provide essential information. Every state has a college or university designated as a land-grant college, usually the largest or oldest agricultural school. In many states, historically African American and tribal colleges also have land-grant status. Land-grant institutions maintain specific information on the state's agriculture and have key contacts with up-to-date information on agricultural industries. Faculty members often specialize in agriculture and can provide valuable insight and information on harvesting trends, use of labor, mechanization of crops, and the human and political implications of agricultural changes.

Land-grant schools get much of their information from a network of field representatives known as cooperative extension agents. Every county has a cooperative extension agent (known as a county agent) who visits local farms and provides information on a variety of farm-related issues. County agents can be a valuable resource for recruiters.

Recruitment Plan

A plan of action for ID&R should be developed after gathering data about the state's or region's agriculture and farm labor force and before sending recruiters to the field. The plan should be reviewed often, with input from those already working with the migrant population. The plan should provide for strategies at the state,

regional, and local levels, where applicable.[5] Three major aspects must be considered when developing a recruitment plan: (1) planning/logistics, (2) implementation, and (3) monitoring of success (or evaluation).

Planning/Logistics

Attending to details and logistics increases the probability that a recruitment plan will succeed. Planning focuses on such areas as deploying recruiters; coordinating with schools, organizations, and other agencies; and informing people (including parents and community) about Migrant Education Program (MEP) services.

Deciding where to recruit. In a perfect world, a recruitment system would cover every county in the state, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. However, migrant education programs have limited resources, making the strategic deployment of recruiters crucial for the efficient identification of children. Deployment, to some extent, should be driven by the need to identify and serve *priority* or *targeted* children.

As indicated earlier, the federal government identifies three areas of priority for migrant children: those failing to meet a state's academic standards, those at risk of failing, and those who have had their school year interrupted. Of these three categories, probably the most reliable data exist for identifying children who have had their school year interrupted. Initially, recruiters should rely on information from the state departments of labor and agriculture to identify potential areas for recruitment.

Following protocol and regulations. The next step is to contact school districts in these areas and obtain a list of families who have recently moved into the district. Surveying these families helps identify which ones have been engaged in agricultural or fishing activities, ultimately generating a list of potentially eligible families. When obtaining information regarding families from school districts and schools, recruiters should follow the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) of 1974. All public schools, as well as education agencies receiving federal funding, are subject to FERPA.

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[5]Leon Johnson and Vidal A. Rivera, *Recruiting Migrant Students: Administrator's Guide* (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Migrant Education, 1989), 21.

This includes migrant education programs. The preliminary guidance for the U.S. Office of Migrant Education provides a summary of FERPA as well as special considerations that should be taken by MEP grantees.[6] Specifically, FERPA authorizes the disclosure of information to representatives of state and local education programs in charge of implementing federally funded programs. In the case of a migrant education program, the disclosure of records is necessary because of the requirement to promote interstate and intrastate coordination and the transfer of records.

To prioritize recruitment efforts, it is essential to determine where most migrants reside in the state. Traditionally, funding for local programs has been tied to the number of eligible migrant children identified, so finding significant numbers of migrant families offers the most return on the recruitment dollar.

Targeting priority students. Conflicts can arise between the missions of finding large numbers of eligible migrants and targeting priority students for service. Families who have signed up for a program but who are later ruled low priority may receive few of the services the recruiter offered. Trying to recruit these same families in the future may prove difficult and embarrassing. Some states have instituted minimum service standards to avoid this problem. Recruiters can provide referrals to social agencies and other free services as a way to offer basic services without making promises they cannot keep. In some states, recruiters are instructed not to promise service until the Certificate of Eligibility (COE) has been processed. The COE is considered the legal document of a migrant education program. Services can not be provided until a COE has been reviewed and approved.[7]

Networking on behalf of families. One of the most important strategies in ID&R is building a recruitment network. At the recruiter level, this entails making contacts with local organizations and people who have direct contact with the farmworker population. Schools, government agencies, churches, and employers are valuable contacts

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[6]U.S. Department of Education, *Preliminary Guidance*, 19.

[7]Ibid., 2; and Al Wright, ed., *Systematic Methodology for Accounting in Recruiter Training: SMART Manual* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana Department of Education, 1986), 36.

in any effort to identify migrant preschoolers, school-age children, and young adults. These organizations and people become the recruiter's eyes and ears in the field as well as the program's ambassadors.[8]

At the regional or state level, more formal contact is advised. MEP administrators commonly write introductory letters to school superintendents about the program and its benefits for the district's migrant students. Other efforts to reinforce recruitment include contacting the directors of various organizations that work regularly with migrants, establishing interagency councils of service providers, and hosting get-togethers to discuss common issues and problems.

Knowing the program. Recruiters are a program's front-line sales force. They not only *represent* the migrant program but also, in many cases, *are* the migrant program. At social service agencies, at school district offices, and in the community, the recruiter often is the only contact with the migrant program. Recruiters must have a detailed working knowledge of all program services. They may not be educators, but they should be able to explain the advantages of having a child attend a migrant summer program or receive special services. They may not be social workers, but they need to know how to help a family in need of housing, clothing, or food. Recruiters should have regular contact with their program's education staff as well as service agencies. This will ensure that recruiters remain aware of services the program can provide. Recruiters also should attend workshops on educational and social topics. A good salesperson must know his or her product.[9]

At the same time, it is important not to oversell the product. As many recruiters know, failure to deliver the services promised is the kiss of death in ID&R. This requires knowledge of the services

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[8]Leon Johnson, *Recruiting Migrant Students: Recruiter's Guide* (Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Migrant Education, 1989), 31; Migrant Student Records System, *Identification and Recruitment Handbook*, 17; Blair A. Rudes and JoAnne L. Willette, *Handbook of Effective Migrant Education Practices: Volume I: Findings* (report prepared for the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Budget and Evaluation) (Arlington, VA: Development Associates, 1990) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 321 945), 14; and Pennsylvania Migrant Education Program, *National Identification and Recruitment*, 23.

[9]Wright, *Systematic Methodology*, 8; and Johnson and Rivera, *Recruiting Migrant Students*, 21.

offered in the district, honesty, and the ability to communicate clearly with families.

Initial Training/Implementation

The quality of initial staff training is critical in the effective implementation of the recruitment plan. Recruiters need to be aware of their program's different regulations and intricacies. Training should help recruiters determine eligibility, assess families' needs, hire other recruiters, understand how culture impacts the recruitment process, and recruit out-of-school children and young adults.

The Certificate of Eligibility (COE). Perhaps the most important role of recruiters is to determine the eligibility of potential program participants. Recruiters and program administrators rely on many tools to determine eligibility. The COE requires recruiters to document basic demographic data, information related to a family's movement, and the type of agriculture or fishing work done by a family member or individual if under age 22. In many states, the COE also is used to inform parents of their rights under FERPA. A migrant family becomes eligible for program services if it meets all program requirements and a recruiter and a supervisor sign off on the COE.[10]

To be or not to be eligible: A program's dilemma. The federal government offers detailed guidance on the eligibility requirements in *Preliminary Guidance for Migrant Education Program, Title I, Part C, Public Law 103-382*. The section on ID&R states, "This guidance is intended to provide broad, guiding principles related to identification and recruitment and is not intended to cover every particular situation a recruiter might encounter."[11] A point of caution should be given regarding eligibility. The above guidance allows recruiters, and the states they represent, room to interpret eligibility guidelines in a liberal or conservative manner. A liberal stance could qualify families who may not really be eligible; on the other hand, a conservative approach could deny services to those who qualify. The U.S. Department of Education's decision to give recruiters leeway can empower

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[10]Wright, *Systematic Methodology*, 23; U.S. Department of Education, *Preliminary Guidance*, 2; and Migrant Student Records System, *Identification and Recruitment Handbook*, 1.

[11]U.S. Department of Education, *Preliminary Guidance*, 2.

states to make their own eligibility determinations while exposing them to the possibility and liability of audit exceptions. The end result is that state determinations, or state interpretations, vary from state to state. These variations are best seen in the approaches taken by recruiters. States that take a conservative approach will require extensive documentation by recruiters (and migrant families) to avoid any possible audit exceptions down the road. States that take a more liberal approach tend to place decision making about eligibility in the hands of recruiters and their direct supervisors. Often, these different approaches lead to families qualifying in one state after not qualifying in another.

Throughout the interview process, a recruiter plays the pivotal role of documenting a family's history to determine eligibility. The state function, therefore, is to train and supervise recruiters adequately while ensuring a quality-control process that will stand up to any future audit. States that trust their staff are frequently the ones that have provided effective, ongoing training on ID&R issues.

Assessing needs of children and families. Federal guidance requires a formal comprehensive needs assessment to determine the educational and support-service needs of migrant families before any services can be provided. Although the education staff of a program usually conducts this assessment, recruiters can appraise the immediate needs of a family during the initial recruitment visit. Getting a quick fix on basic and social needs can speed the process of sorting out which services a family or students require: Do they have enough food, clothing, heat, bedding, and school supplies? Is there an apparent medical need? Is there a special education student? Do they know how to access local medical, dental, or social services? The formality of these assessments varies from state to state depending on the state's commitment, procedures, and training. Some states, for instance, have developed needs assessments geared toward the different populations served by the program, such as preschoolers, school-aged children, and out-of-school youth.[12]

Although migrant education programs have limited resources to address all identified needs, it is important for a program to

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[12] *No Child Left Behind Act*, §§ 1301-09; and Pennsylvania Migrant Education Program, *National Identification and Recruitment*, 22.

profile a family's resources as quickly as possible. Programs can prioritize and meet these needs or refer the family to other agencies or organizations, if necessary. The recruiter can help a migrant family address its immediate concerns and make them feel truly welcome in the new community. A recruiter's effectiveness in this role depends greatly on training.

Hiring recruiters. Hiring the right recruiters is key. The qualities of a good recruiter are addressed in the National Identification and Recruitment Guides and many state recruitment manuals. Recruiters should have a desire to help families and should be self-starters, patient, down-to-earth, and willing to work flexible hours.[13]

The person with the most educational credentials is not necessarily the best fit for a recruitment position. The job requires a person who is not afraid to get his or her hands dirty. Driving back roads, working at night, knocking on doors in rural and poor neighborhoods, fending off barking dogs, entering residences alone, and, at the same time, soliciting personal information to fill out an eligibility form is not for the faint of heart. Recruiters, many times, are characterized as the "salt of the earth." Good recruiters are equally comfortable talking with a school principal at the central office and a recently arrived immigrant in a tomato field. Recruiters are the face of the MEP to many schools, organizations, agencies, and, most importantly, migrant families.

Culture and language implications in the recruitment process. Important aspects of training and implementation are the effects of culture and language on the recruitment process. Migrant education programs provide services to families from many different cultures and countries. Whenever possible, recruiters should be from the same cultural or language group as the families being served. When recruiters speak the language and understand the culture of the client, the recruitment process is more sensitive and, ultimately, will be expedited.[14]

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[13]Johnson, *Recruiting Migrant Students*, 7; Johnson and Rivera, *Recruiting Migrant Students*, 47; Migrant Student Records System, *Identification and Recruitment Handbook*, 1; and Kentucky Department of Education, Migrant Education Office, *Handbook for Identification and Recruitment* (Frankfort: Kentucky Department of Education, 1999).

[14]Johnson, *Recruiting Migrant Students*, 24.

However, hiring recruiters who speak the same language as the families is not always possible. Many recruiters must recruit within various language and cultural groups. In these cases, it is important to train staff in the basics of the cultures and languages of the migrants they are recruiting. This is especially true when recruiters visit the homes of migrant families. Can a male recruiter enter a house when the father is not at home? Is it appropriate to refuse food? Having a basic knowledge of the *do's* and *don'ts* of the culture can have a lasting effect, because recruiters act as the initial ambassadors for a program.[15]

Community-based recruitment. Identifying out-of-school youth is an increasingly important factor in implementing a recruitment plan. Many migrant children can be found at school during the school year. Checking with key school personnel (attendance officers, nurses, secretaries, bus drivers, etc.) can help identify many eligible families. Yet, a program serves children from birth until age 22, so school-based recruiters would miss families with preschool children or with eligible young adults who do not attend school. Also, some young adults travel without their families to seek farm work; these youth are less likely to enroll in school but are still eligible for program services. To identify these particular populations, recruitment efforts should be community-based.[16]

Checking with local Head Start programs, churches, and social service agencies are just some of the avenues for identifying out-of-school youth. Other community-based recruitment efforts include visiting traditional farmworker houses and ethnic grocery stores, looking for weekend soccer games, and attending church-sponsored social events for local Hispanics or other farmworker ethnic or cultural groups. These activities can help a recruiter find eligible migrant children who might not show up in a local school.[17]

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[15]Pennsylvania Migrant Education Program, *National Identification and Recruitment*, 16.

[16]National Program for Secondary Credit Exchange and Accrual, *Options and Resources for Achieving Credit Accrual for Secondary-Aged Migrant Youth* (Edinburg, TX: Region I Education Service Center, 1994) (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 368 532), 1.

[17]Migrant Student Records System, *Identification and Recruitment Handbook*, 16; and Virginia Migrant Education Program, *Recruiters Manual* (Richmond: Virginia Department of Education, 2001), 3.

Community-based recruiting also has the added benefit of finding families who may be afraid to enter local schools due to their immigration status. These families are eligible for migrant education programs as well as public education. In addition, community-based recruitment can identify families who come to the area only when school is out, such as during the summer or between sessions. Out-of-school youth deserve equal access to program services; therefore, recruitment systems need to deploy recruiters in both school-based and community-based settings.

Monitoring/Evaluating Success

After spending so much time and effort on a plan, program staff must determine its success. Are all migrant children being identified? Are any new pockets of migrant children being canvassed? How can the plan be improved? Good quality control of a recruitment system has several components: ongoing training, supervision in the field, checking the COEs, and a self-audit system.[18]

Training recruitment staff. The amount and quality of training recruiters receive before they are deployed to the field vary greatly from state to state and, sometimes, even within states. Some are simply hired, given a manual and a bunch of blank COEs, and sent out to find families. Others receive extensive training before they ever touch a COE. Thorough initial and ongoing training can prevent audit problems and other difficulties with families who may be misled by an underprepared recruiter. Many states have comprehensive training manuals, and the federal government currently is updating training materials that could be used on a national scale.

Effective supervision. Recruiters often are left on their own to cover large areas and may express feelings of isolation. It is important that a supervisor occasionally spend time with recruiters as they go about their daily duties. This gives recruiters a sense they are not out there on their own and gives the supervisor a reality check when examining the COEs and logs turned in by the recruiter. Many programs experience eligibility problems with some families because they have lost regular human contact with

[18]Wright, *Systematic Methodology*, 52; and Johnson and Rivera, *Recruiting Migrant Students*, 83.

their recruiters in the field. The most extensive paperwork and quality-control measures are useless if not backed up by regular field visits by the recruiters' supervisors.[19]

Record keeping. Review of the COEs is another important quality-control measure. Typically, the COE must be checked to ensure that the qualifying agricultural activity is within the guidelines set by the federal government and the state. A reviewer must sign off on the COE to approve a family's eligibility for program services. Then, the COE is turned over to a clerk who enters the information into a database system. Clerks should check to make sure all fields have been filled in properly. This process varies depending on the state's total number of children and COEs. In states with a small population of migrant children, the data entry clerk and reviewer might be the same person; in larger states, these responsibilities are shared among many people. Often, the COEs are sent to the state office for final review or approval. In any case, the review of the COE helps ensure that only eligible families receive services and that the program's integrity is maintained.

Friendly audits and frequent checks. An important component of any quality-control system is independent reviews, or *friendly audits*. As diligent as states or districts might be in ensuring the integrity of their COEs and the honesty of their recruiters, an occasional review by people who are not a regular part of the system can be beneficial. Depending on a program's funding, independent auditors can be hired to conduct formal reviews. Sometimes, states assign staff not regularly engaged in the recruitment process to review hiring practices, training regimen, paperwork flow, reviewer standards, database entry process, and field-visit schedules. Sampling the COEs for eligibility and other concerns should be a part of the process. Establishing such a process, either formally or informally, can help any program regularly update and improve its quality-control measures.

Once the recruitment system is up and running, it is important to review its effectiveness annually. Have all the plan's elements been followed? Does the training need to be updated? Is the program

[19]Johnson and Rivera, *Recruiting Migrant Students*, 36.

finding and hiring recruiters who speak the same language as the migrant families? Have all efforts been taken to locate out-of-school youth? Do the program's numbers reflect what the U.S. Departments of Labor and Agriculture indicate about migrant farmworkers in the state or region? Has a friendly audit been conducted recently? These are just some of the components that should be included in an evaluation of the program's recruitment efforts. Recruiters can make additional recommendations about the evaluation system and the ID&R process.

Conclusion

A good recruitment system, like agriculture itself, is changing and dynamic. It needs adequate resources dedicated to its maintenance. Effective hiring, training, support, and monitoring can help ensure that eligible migrant children and families will be found and receive the services they deserve. Addressing these issues in a frequent and objective manner can help determine the steps necessary for improvement and prioritize areas that need immediate assistance.

Additional Resources can be obtained through the following:

- ESCORT and the National Migrant Education Hotline: 800-451-8058, or http://www.escort.org/
- Binational Migrant Education Program: 512-245-1365
- U.S. Department of Education, Office of Migrant Education: 202-260-1164, or http://www.ed.gov/offices/OESE/MEP/

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